

SQ On Air  
*Woman*  
Episode 6  
Jensen

*I Am*  
Rosemary Bright and Emma

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HOST Aimée Lindorff

GUESTS Rosemary Blight Producer - *I Am Woman*  
Emma Jensen Principal - Goalpost Pictures  
Writer - *I Am Woman*

References [\*I Am Woman\* Stan Original Film](#)  
[SQ Development Fund](#)  
[Lillian Roxon's Discotique series](#) - courtesy of the National Film & Sound Archive

*I Am Woman*: the making of an icon

Blurb

Hear from Goalpost Picture's **Rosemary Bright** and screenwriter **Emma Jensen** about the upcoming Stan Original Film *I Am Woman*, about the life, loves, and career of Australian music and feminist icon, Helen Reddy.

Reddy would become one of the biggest superstars of her time, and her eponymous song *I Am Woman* was the first number one hit on the Billboard charts by an Australian-born artist and the first Australian-penned song to win a Grammy Award. Her song would define a generation and be an anthem of the women's liberation movement for years to come.

Starring Tilda Cobham-Hervey as the singer-songwriter, Danielle Macdonald as Lillian Roxon, and Evan Peters and Jess Wald, and directed by Unjoo Moon.

*I Am Woman* would come to reflect the challenges of the Australian film industry in a post-COVID world, as it was due to open the 2020 Gold Coast Film Festival before the festival's unfortunate cancellation in March. It's since found new life as a Stan Original Film and will premiere on the streaming service on 28th August 2020.

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| Aimee: | Welcome to SQ On Air, presented by Screen Queensland. Exploring the issues and news affecting Queensland screen industry. |
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|        | <p>I'm Aimée Lindorff and in this episode, I chat to producer Rosemary Bright and writer Emma Jensen about feature film <i>I Am Woman</i>, chronicling the rise to fame of Australian singer-songer Helen Reddy from penniless lounge singer to feminist icon.</p> <p>Helen Reddy would become one of the biggest superstars of her time, and her eponymous song <i>I AM Woman</i> was the first number one hit on the <i>Billboard</i> chart by an Australian-born artist and the first Australian-penned song to win a <a href="#">Grammy Award</a>.</p> <p>The film focuses not only on Reddy's music career and the influence the 1970s women's movement had on her career, but her friendship with iconic rock journalist Australian Lillian Roxon and her tumultuous relationship with ex-husband and former manager Jeff Wald.</p> <p>Starring Tilda Cobham-Hervey as the singer-songwriter, as well as <a href="#">Dumplin'</a>'s Danielle Macdonald and <a href="#">American Horror Story</a> alum Evan Peters, and directed by Unjoo Moon</p> <p><i>I Am Woman</i> had its world premiere at the 2019 Toronto International Film Festival where it opened the prestigious Special Presentations section and was due to open the 2020 Gold Coast Film Festival, before the festival's unfortunate cancellation in March due to the COVID-19 restrictions. It's found new life as a Stan Original Film and will premiere on streaming service on 28th August.</p> <p>I caught up with Rose and Emma before to it's digital release about the transition to digital release, female-forward productions, Australian icons, and the music anthem that is <i>I Am Woman</i>.</p> |
|        | All right, well, let's talk about <i>I Am Woman</i> . Congratulations to you both and thank you for joining me.   |
| Rose:  | A pleasure.   |
| Aimee: | So, let's start at the beginning of that project. And Rose, this might be a question for you. How did <i>I Am Woman</i> come about? Where did... Yes, how did it come about?  |

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| Rose:  | <p>Unjoo Moon, the director, is based in America, but she was in Australia, and she dropped in to say hello, and her and I had known each other for a long time. She grew up here before she went to the States, and she came in and said, "I was in America, I was at this awards ceremony," I think it was G'Day USA she was at. And she said, "There was a big round table, and there was this place cards, and one of the place cards said Helen Reddy on it. And I wasn't sitting next to her." So, as only Unjoo can, she swapped around all the place cards, and got to sit next to Helen, and spent the entire night talking to her. And then, spent the next year getting to know her, getting to know her family, finding out her story, and she couldn't believe that no-one had told this story before. So, she arrived in Australia with this passion and excitement and belief that Helen Reddy's story needed to be told, and that's how I found out about it. That's how it came to me.</p> |
| Aimee: | <p>It's quite remarkable that, for someone of her significance, both within Australian music, within music generally, female voiced music, and within the women's rights movement, that this is the first time that Reddy's story has been told on screen, either dramatically or as documentary. There's nothing in terms of her story on screen, What makes audiences ready for her story now?</p>  |
| Rose:  | <p>I think audiences have always been ready for her story. I think... And Emma, I'm sure, will have quite a bit to say about this, is that stories about great female achievements, achievements by great women, have been rarely told. And I don't think it's because audiences don't want to know about them, it's just that we haven't been telling them, Could we have told that story 10 years ago? I think, yes, I think people would have gone to it, but it wasn't the right time to finance, and actually bring the film at that time into the world. It is now, people want to see these stories.</p>   |
| Emma:  | <p>I think that's true, Rose, because I guess, in what excited all of us about Helen's story was that it still resonated to us. I've always been fascinated with women who we know, which I think is the thing with Helen. She was absolutely known, but we didn't really know the story behind the woman, and what she went through... I guess, we never did it in a way of going, "Let's make sure this connects because of what's happening globally" So, it was absolutely coming at it from that good story, well told principle of this is such a fascinating, resonant story that needs to be heard.</p>   |
| Aimee: | <p>It's interesting that you say that, because to contrast some of the issues of the time that we saw in I Am Woman, like she was one of the first women to have a</p>  |

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|        | <p>credit card in her own name, her husband had to co-sign the mortgage, seeing how much things have changed since then, and yet, in the case of the Me Too movement, and some of the issues facing particularly female musicians, and female artists like Taylor Swift and Ke\$ha in the music industry, how far we still have to go, in that regard.</p>   |
| Rose:  | <p>Yes, it's quite an extraordinary thing to watch this film, and to realize how contemporary it is. We've all stood on the shoulders of these women that fought it for us, and what I hope this movie does is to show, we've now got to let people stand on our shoulders, young women, to give young women the encouragement, and to give them a voice, because they still need a voice. This is not meant to be a film which is all about messages. This is a film about entertainment and music, and great loves, and it's got great dramatic highs and lows, but at its core, deep, underneath it is that message of... If it wasn't for the Helen Reddys, and women of her time, I certainly wouldn't be where I am today, We've all got to remember that, because it is still really tough.</p> |
| Emma:  | <p>And I think the other interesting thing, in terms of timing, too... And again, we were well into the process with I Am Woman, but even within our industry, as Gender Matters came to the fore, and we started really talking about where are the female stories? Where are the female-driven teams, who is dictating to the content that's on screen? Because we could all see very clearly from the outset that this was a story for women, and that they would see it... We believe that this is a movie that women want to see, which then, we found ourselves echoing through Helen, and the arguments that she was having along the way.</p>  |
| Aimee: | <p>There's that great quote by Helen, where she said, "Has anyone actually asked women what they want to listen to?" And I feel like this taps into that. Has anyone actually asked women who they want to see on screen, and what kind of stories we want to see, as well. Yes. One thing you touched on there, Emma, was talking about the Gender Matters initiative, what really struck me about this project particularly was that it's so female forward. There's female producers, female director, female writer, female editor, which is amazing. And then, West End films, which is a female led sales team, Goodship Women's Fund was involved, I understand, as well. And I see Australian Women's Weekly was also involved?</p>  |
| Rose:  | <p>Yes you did. Goodship Women's Fund was a group of women who came around, and contributed... Were private investors in the movie, and there were some had put in only small amounts, and there were some of them put in bigger amounts,</p>  |

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|        | <p>and one of those people, groups, was Bauer Media, and the Australian Women's Weekly. Because our, I suppose, the themes of what they've been taking out to women for many, many years, and the themes of the movie align. They love Helen, they adore Helen, they are like... They've got Helen from magazines from the '70s. So, it was a really nice fit, and it's so beautiful to have all those women together. They're all over the country, some are in America, and there is some men in that group, but we still call it the Goodship Women's Fund.</p>   |
| Aimee: | <p>So, further to that, one of the things that struck me about I Am Woman is, yes it's a story about Helen and particularly her relationship to husband Jeff Wald, but also, the almost heart of the story, or the foundation of this story is her relationship with Lilian Roxon, and that female relationship where they're not pitted against each other, they're not each other's nemeses, which is often the case when you have female relationships depicted on screen, and it was such an important part of Helen's journey. Emma how do you go about representing that on screen, and particularly, such iconic faces like Helen Reddy and Lilian Roxon?</p> |
| Emma:  | <p>How terrifying, and what a treat at the same time, to get to write iconic women. And I think in reading Helen's autobiography, those mentions of Lilian were one of the things that jumped out to me, her stories with Lilian, and as Rose and Unjoo and I spoke more about it... And we were also very struck by two women in 1965 in America, they were the trailblazers, the forerunners for all of us, really. For so many who have gone to have that experience, and ending up-</p>  |
| Aimee: | <p>Two Australian women, no less.</p>  |
| Emma:  | <p>Two Australian women, absolutely. I think it happened really quite organically, of feeling like Lily and Helen's friendship was a very big part of this story, and the idea of women supporting each other in what they wanted to achieve, and I think in that finding of a kindred spirit as well, that there's something so beautiful that we felt that that was something that we very much... That we wanted to focus on, and that would be our driver for the story. And again, they were just terrific to write. Such distinctive voices to bounce off each other, as well.</p>   |
| Rose:  | <p>Yes, that's... I think it was the real key for you, wasn't it, Em, when you... When you connected to the Lilian Roxon relationship with Helen, it brought the whole thing to life. There was something about it which meant that we were making a film about female friendships, and the impact of having that close friend, and how it can empower you, and how it can... It can give you strength to do things you normally wouldn't do, and it was really interesting, in script terms, to watch.</p>  |

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|        | <p>It was always a beautiful script, but to watch the insertion of the power of Lilian, and because she wrote the liner notes for the first album, and they became almost like the lyrics of the movie, almost. They became this thing which spoke about what we all want to hear, that our voice is unique, and that we're allowed to talk, and we're allowed to be heard.</p>  |
| Emma:  | <p>Music biopics, there's a certain convention and structure around them, and some things, I think, are unavoidable, but I know... I love music biopics as does Rose and that's something we definitely geeked out about together a lot in our first meeting. And it's always been my dream to write a music story as well, so this was such a gift. But I knew from the music biopics that I really loved, like <i>Walk the Line</i>, <i>Control</i>, <i>What's Love Got to Do With It</i>, it's finding those other elements beyond the drive for success, and drive to succeed, the drive to fame, and also avoiding the rise and fall to rise again story, and Helen's didn't have that part for various reasons, but I think that was something that I looked for, and Rose and Unjoo absolutely that we wanted to find the universality of the experience as well, and I think that is also what Helen and Lilian gave us, because there's something very relatable about that friendship, and as Rose was saying the person that gets you, and champions you and believes in you.</p> |
| Aimee: | <p>Talking further about Lilian and Helen, or Helen and Lilian, tell us a little bit about casting Tilda Cobham-Hervey and Danielle Macdonald, because they're... As we said, their friendship is at the heart of the story. It would've been no short task trying to find people to represent two visibly recognisable characters, but also, really, two women who have such a presence physically, as well. Helen on stage, and Lilian, her persona is so large. Rose, how do you cast those characters?</p>   |
| Rose:  | <p>Not easily, but how amazing is Australia? We have... I don't know what's in the water here, but we have more actors than we do anything else, and for both Tilda and Danielle, we dug deep. We really dug deep to see who was around, and certainly, starting off with Danielle, I had seen Patti Cake\$. I was in Cannes, and I snuck into a press screening of Patti Cake\$, and normally, press screenings are full of really grumpy, old, they've been there a thousand times, these journalists. They've seen it all, they look at their phones, they scribble stuff, they eat. And I watched this room of journalists not move, and are aghast at Danielle Macdonald's performance in that. The fact she was Australian blew everyone's minds.</p>  |
|        | <p>She has got a quality about her, she's incredibly empathetic. There's a lot of empathy within her. There's also a lot of courage, there's a lot of... She's very</p>  |

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|  | brave in what she does, so once we hooked into her, it was very hard to look past her, and she is... Apart from that, she's also the most lovely person, and she's an incredibly skilled in what she does. She has a great talent, and she bought into the whole thing.  |
|  | She'd ring me up, and she would listen to the... Interesting, Lilian Roxon used to do podcasts. They weren't called podcasts at the time, she used to record herself and send down the wire interviews with Iggy Pop, and all these people, and they're all in the National Film and Sound Archives. So, for anyone that's interested in digging deep into Lilian Roxon, there is a lot of stuff there. So, Danielle really engaged in all that, and she spent a long time detailing and finding the details of who Lilian was.  |
|  | Then, Tilda. Beautiful Tilda Cobham-Hervey. Really. We wanted to find... And in particular, for both girls, actually, we wanted to identify... We wanted it to seem like it was a fish out of water. Going back to what Emma was saying about... These are two Australian women who found each other, and made things happen for each other. And certainly, what Lilian did for Helen was give her the projection, if you like, to move forward, and go to do what she wanted to do. So, we wanted... I think it was very important that we cast people who felt they were fish out of water, that were Australian. So, we were very lucky that both Tilda and Danielle had a profile internationally, so we could go there, and Unjoo saw Tilda in 52 Tuesdays or something, going right back to early Tilda material, and then met Tilda.  |
|  | Unjoo... Her process is, she likes to sit and talk to people, talk to actors, and get their take on the material, and she met Tilda, and she rang up and went, "There is no-one else on the planet who can play Helen Reddy. Not only does she have an uncanny likeness to her, she's also..." The process... Tilda's process is one of deep, deep, deep, deep, deep research. Anyone who has... If there's fans of Helen Reddy listening, when you see the movie, and you see the way Tilda moves her arms, and the way she moves her face, and the way she winks, it is just mind blowing how exact... And it's not a karaoke performance. It is a deep, intuitive researched... She did movement, and voice, and she took so much care, and she talks about it... She wanted to honor Helen, and that is something that... It's hard to pass by an actor who has that engagement, and that level of commitment, and is that talented, and I sound like her mother. I'm so proud of Tilda. I'm proud of [crosstalk 00:30:02]. I'm proud of all of our actors, but yes. |

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| Aimee: | <p>It's interesting that you say that, because I think what Tilda brings to it... Helen Reddy's such a... She's such a light person, her persona, at least. There's a joy and a lightness to her, but also this resolution and determination, this level of steel behind her character that Tilda does an incredible job of embodying. Like you said, it's not a caricature, it's not a imitation. She's embodied this character, yes. It's remarkable.</p>  |
|        | <p>And then, you contrast that with Evan Peters, who... To create this character, or shape this character, again, showing the lightness and dark of someone who was both beloved and also in a really terrible time of his life, and to make him still very empathetic.</p>  |
| Emma:  | <p>I have to say, writing Jeff was fascinating. Of all the characters, in a way, I always knew what Jeff was going to say. He has a very strong voice. And so, I guess, when I first saw Evan, which I guess was on set. "That's the voice in my head!" To walk that line between drama and humor, because there is a humor to Jeff as well, Evan, I think, straddles that beautifully. <del>But yes, I'll let Rose go and talk.</del></p>   |
| Rose:  | <p>No, you're absolutely right, Em. It was a bit of a search for Jeff, and to find someone who had that voice that Emma was talking about, and when we found Evan, we found our voice for Jeff. And it was really interesting, because there was a lot of conversation on whether Tilda should meet Helen or Evan should meet Jeff, and Tilda decided not to meet Helen, not because she didn't... She has since met Helen, but because she wanted... She knew she had to make it her own, make the character her own, and also, she was doing Helen at different stages of life than Helen is now. With Evan, I remember Unjoo going, "Look, I really... I think he should do the same," but Evan... Next phone call we get was from Jeff himself, going, "Evan's here!" And he's sending photographs of Evan and Jeff sitting on the couch at Jeff's house, and they'd gone to have a manicure together.</p> |
| Rose:  | <p>The photograph of the two of them, sitting on the couch with their hands out showing us the manicures. But it all went incredibly well, and Jeff Wald is one of our biggest fans, and we of him, 30 years sober.</p>  |
| Emma:  | <p>And I think, in crafting Jeff and Helen, certainly, I was mindful. We all were. There was a spark between them, there was a rapport, that similar kind of drive. There was an unconventionality to it. So, there was something in that to tap into, as well. When it worked, it worked. So, that was also a good guide in going, "We can see why these two found each other, and were together for the time that they were together," as well.</p>  |

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| Rose:  | <p>There was a great love there. There was an absolute great love there, and without a doubt, there was... Jeff Wald is charismatic. He is way charismatic. The fact that it ended where it ended is the great tragedy of this story, and where he went is shocking, and it had a terrible impact on Helen. Like a lot of great love stories, it started with great love, and they connected, and there was the chemistry between them, which was really... Which, I think, Emma and Unjoo caught so beautifully. And he's a master marketer.</p>  |
| Emma:  | <p>He is.</p>  |
| Aimee: | <p>You certainly can see a lot of that come through, and he was always a very strong advocate for Helen.</p> <p>This story covers over 20 years of Helen's life, over 20 years of Helen's career. How do you choose what to include, and what to highlight in a biopic?</p>  |
| Emma:  | <p>I think, for me, in going and writing biopics, and... I've written a few now, but it... Look, it actually does become apparent in a way. So, when I first read Helen's book, and started having more conversations with Unjoo and Rose, met Helen, and her children. So, you take on a lot, but there were probably the things when I first read the book that I went, "I love that she went to New York as a single mother with a two year old in 1965."</p>   |
|        | <p>So, there were those things that I really connected to on a deep level, And obviously, the song as well. The song is very, very important because of the power of I Am Woman, what this song had done in the world for so many women and men, but that it was... It changed lives. So, that's playing in the background. So, I think the thing for me, it's... I guess it's, in a way, working out what the film's saying and what your dramatic question is, and in all those elements, what became apparent that it was a woman who wrote the song that changed so many women's lives, but in a way, had to embody and step into her own song to get to where she needed to be, without giving too much away.</p> |
|        | <p>once you're clear on what that is, choices... It informs itself. There's so much that you love, and there's so many moments, but when it's always coming back to how are driving, or how are we getting towards that moment, what you decided to pull, put in and out, the choices, in some ways, are made for you, I suppose. Yes, there's absolutely things that you do need to work in, but they always seem to be things that fall organically, anyway. And yes, the challenge with this, and</p>   |

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|       | what informed all those choices, was being that we started, effectively, in 1965, and we end in '89, which is more the coda.   |
|       | So, that is quite a timespan, but it was how we could deep dive into the sections that we were in, and then manage our time jumps. In that way, we're not moving too fast through the story, and so, we really could get to know Helen in those key relationships, and get to know her as a character.   |
| Rose: | Yes, and without a doubt, there is a whole other story about her time in Australia, and... Because she was quite big in Australia before she left, she'd been on Bandstand, she won the Bandstand competition. So, we did have to make some choices, and I suppose, it goes right back to the question at the beginning. Why this story, and why now, is that the fact that this young Australian woman did what she did in America and had that many number one singles, and had that many songs in the Billboard charts. She had more songs in the Billboards charts than the Beatles in one year. So, that's pretty... That was a really big part of the story we wanted to tell. We wanted to tell... We wanted to proudly put out her... Look what she'd done. So, and it's not a mini series. So, Emma had to be... There was a lot of work Emma had to do. There's, obviously, a number of drafts about going, "Oh, well, what is... Let's get it right down to the essence," and that's... We spoke earlier about when Lilian Roxon was... That relationship started to unfold for us, that became an underpinning of it all as well, which helped us navigate through it. |
| Rose: | A feature film, it's about getting to the very essence of the story you wanted to tell, so-  |
| Emma: | And I think we had a really... And it's also a testament to the creative process that I think we had on this in, really, all of us trusting each other in the story that we wanted to tell... Yes, I think any of those decisions were not made lightly, but they were made so lively.   |
| Rose: | Yes, that's right. That's right. And of course, every... We used to do... Which is different in film. We'd come together... So, now, we'd probably do it on Zoom, but before we discovered Zoom or Skype that we could do it, Emma would fly in, and Unjoo would fly in, and we'd all sit round a table, and we'd talk. And it was really lovely, and we'd always end of singing, you see. Actually, the key to the whole thing is singing.  |
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| Aimee: | So, on that note, too, with choosing what to include, and balancing the historical events and the drama, and the significance of these moments, both in the music industry, and the women's lib movement, and in Helen's life, Emma, what responsibility, if any, did you feel about telling the story of someone who's still alive?  |
| Emma:  | It is a huge responsibility, because they are people... They are real people, and they have families, and I don't... I think, working in this space, it has to be done with respect and integrity, because there is part of it, then, that are going, "Oh, it's just a movie," as well. So, we were all very, very conscious of... And not in a way of censoring anything, because I think, in a way, as it evolved, too, I feel like... Especially in terms of Jeff and Helen, we really... We did go a ways into quite a dark place for them, in particular, and showed the darkness of the relationship. We know where it came from, and we know how much they did actually love each other, so we could go there. |
|        | But in terms of the historical events, as well... I think, again, Helen was our guide. It was moving through it with Helen, and knowing what her role was, and what that meant for her, too. Because in that way, there's always that balance of how much do we bring in the political side.  |
|        | I think, a big part of Helen's story that we wanted to capture was that she took it from the political realm into the lives of women who weren't potentially yet politicised, but were the beginnings of the awakening, as well. Actually, one of the scenes we cut out was seeing Helen with consciousness raising groups that she used to run in L.A. in her very early days, before she made it, and that was... So, again, it was always on a very, very personal level until the song hit, and then, I think, drove... Was part of that drive around the movement, as well.  |
| Aimee: | Rosemary, did you feel that there was a bit of a voice over your shoulder with the family   |
| Rose:  | I think that if you enter into stories about real people, they should always be over your shoulder, and if you're not feeling them, then there's something wrong. You have a deep responsibility to them. And Emma's right, it doesn't mean you have to sanitise or censor yourself, but you do have to be aware that you're dealing with peoples' lives. We made <i>The Sapphires</i> , and those aunties, the original Sapphires are still in my heart and mind. They travel with it, whether they like it or not, and that's the same with Helen and her family. I was at a screening. We  |

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|       | <p>showed a cut of the film before lock-off to the family. So, I had the deep privilege, and terrifying privilege, of being in that space. It was certainly something.</p>  |
| Rose: | <p>We went to these screening rooms in L.A., and they're these tiny screening rooms, have about four rows of seats, and we decided we'd do Helen and her kids first, and then Jeff Wald, because Jeff and Helen haven't... They haven't been together for a long time, so... And considering what the movie was about, we thought it was best to have them separate. So, we showed it to Helen first, and Unjoo spoke to Helen before it started, and said, "Look, this is about your life, but it's inspired. There is some inspiration. We've taken some liberties to tell the story." And she said, "Oh, get on with it." So there we were, Unjoo and I sat behind Helen, who sang through every song, got deeply moved at a certain part of the movie that I don't want to reveal around Lilian, and at the end of it, you could've heard a pin drop.</p>   |
|       | <p>It was so moving. I cry thinking about it, still. And then, the projectionist, this young dude, this L.A. dude came running out of the [inaudible 00:51:05] box, down to Helen, and hugged her and said, "You're my hero!" And it was like... It was amazing. So, they loved it, they got so much out of it, so we felt good about that. So then, they... We thought they had left, but then we ushered Jeff and his family, and his lovely daughter Sarah, and his wife Deborah came in, and they started to watch the movie, Every time Tilda sang, he'd whisper to the person sitting beside him. And I was there behind him going, "Oh my gosh."</p>   |
|       | <p>And then, at the end of the movie, he stood up... And he's formidable. He's a big bloke. And he's still got this big, booming voice. He commands attention, without a doubt. He said, "Was that Helen singing?" Because it's not... We have... It's not Helen's voice in the film. Helen's songs are in the film, but there is certain ones. And he couldn't believe it wasn't her. He said, "I thought it was her." And he produced her records. he said, "Whatever you need from me, I will give you it." And this is... It's not kind on him, the movie. So, that was amazing, and I stopped shaking, and then I walked outside with him, and there was Helen, and all the family. And they hadn't really been in the same space together for a long time. And we stood back, and they all got together, gave each other a hug, and took a family photograph, and it was an amazing moment But it was this moment where there was so much kindness, forgiveness, and also proud of what Helen had achieved, and their part in it, and it was beautiful. We have that photograph, actually, of the family.</p> |

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|        | <p>But yes. So, that was the experience of screening to Helen. Helen's response was the most moving response I've ever encountered screening a film to somebody, and I did say, "I don't need anyone else to watch this," after I'd had that experience, but I do, actually. I need a whole lot of people to watch it. Everyone needs to watch it. Do not listen to me. Everyone, please watch the movie!</p>  |
| Aimee: | <p>Well, that's a very good note to ask, then, about how people are watching the movie. It had the world premiere at Toronto International Film Festival. It was due to have its Australian premiere at Gold Coast Film Festival, but then obviously, COVID-19 struck, and the festival was canceled. What was your response when the festival was canceled?</p>   |
| Emma:  | <p>Well, for me, being an ex-Queenslander, and living just over the border, the Gold Coast Film Festival had been such a supporter of me. It was pretty disappointing, and I think, for me, on a purely selfish note of going, me and my family were going to come down from Brisbane, my husband's family. It was going to be that very shared experience, so... And again, to see it for the festival was quite surreal, because I think it was the Tuesday we've done the media release, and there I was, being photographed, and by Friday, it was all over. I think that day the Gold Coast bulletin had actually published the article about it, the front page was, "Tom Hanks has coronavirus." So, then things got really real when Tom Hanks got it. It really was like, "God [inaudible 00:55:35] whatever you believe in, send this message to get Tom Hanks to go, "People, you need to get serious about this.***"</p> |
| Rose:  | <p>Patient zero.</p>   |
| Emma:  | <p>Yes, exactly. I will forever keep that newspaper in its entirety for that. But it all happened so quickly, didn't it, Rose? And we then started to go, "Oh, what's the follow-on effect?"</p>   |
| Rose:  | <p>It's always a privilege to be invited to a film festival, but to be... We were opening it, and Screen Queensland had been the first investor in the movie.</p>  |
| Emma:  | <p>That's true, yes.</p>   |
| Rose:  | <p>But Emma is a born and bred Queenslander, and it was nice. It was this... It just felt absolutely perfect, and I must admit, it broke my heart, and it's... Yes. I feel for them. I feel for film festivals all over the world.</p>   |

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| Rose:  | <p>It's one of the things about film festivals for independent movies, it's really, really important. It's fun to be invited to a film festival, it's... Without a doubt, it's really great experience, but it's really, really important for independent movies to have these platforms. That's when your word of mouth comes out, that's where your sales come from. So, Gold Coast, yes, it was... Thank you, we were very honored to be invited, but it was also a key part of our word of mouth campaign. That was where we were going to sing with the masses on the Gold Coast, and spread the word.</p>                                  |
| Emma:  | <p>I know we sung in Toronto, which is-</p>  |
| Rose:  | <p>That is on YouTube, the singing in Toronto, so for those who are keen, they can see it.</p>   |
| Aimee  | <p>So, then, how does, I guess, that process change with, as you said, independent films' festival circuit, particularly as part of the distribution model? How does that then change when festivals are no longer part of that model?</p>   |
| Rose:  | <p>Festivals are pivoting, which is the word of the moment, isn't it? But Adelaide Film Festival, who were an investor in the movie, they are actually going to be showing the film in cinemas as a special event before the Stan release. So, that is their way where they can do social distancing within the cinemas, and that... It would have had a big premiere event, obviously, at Adelaide, but that can't happen. So, that's what they've done.</p>  |
|        | <p>In America, because we release in America in mid-September, and we are doing some virtual film festivals. There's millions of these little film festivals. The Sonoma Film Festival, there's tiny little festivals, but they're important for word of mouth, so we've done... I think we're on our third virtual one. But there's a lot of issues around virtual, which is making sure that they're... An organized festival who understand geo-blocking. You can't... Piracy is still an issue, so we're all, in distributors, and film makers, and festivals, are all trying to find a way through, but festivals are really important.</p> |
| Aimee: | <p>But now, premiering on Stan, August 28. How did that come about?</p>  |
| Rose:  | <p>When Gold Coast shut down, and we'd started our marketing campaign, we'd started our first screenings, we were on the road, posters were done, everything was ready to go. Trailer was dropped for the theatrical, and we all shut down. For about... For a while, I think we all... The world was saying, "I'll give it 30 days. This</p>  |

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|       | won't go long." And then, we started to see it increasingly... This is not going to end soon, and Stan approached Transmission, our distributor, and they had such a passion for the movie. Stan are an Australian streaming service, which is really... I think, is great and great to have in our country. They are committed to Australian film, and I'd seen what they'd done with the Kelly Gang, they did every bus. So, I did a... I spoke to Nick Forward at Stan and said, "As long as I get buses, I want buses." So, now, if I don't-  |
| Emma: | Oh, did you ask for that billboard across the M1? Because I really like that. I was partial to that.  |
| Rose: | Yes, no, I want billboards and buses, and then he even threw in advertising in the middle of the Voice. What they bring to it, it's what Helen did. Helen's songs reached into middle Australia. Helen's songs weren't just for a small narrow group. Helen's songs were played by women who heard <i>I Am Woman</i> , and for that moment, sang the song as they were driving the kids to school, and there was... She did something, she penetrated into a world and had a huge impact, and I think by going on to Stan, that gives us a real opportunity. They have a big audience share in this country. They have the resources to make sure everyone knows it's on.   |
| Emma: | It's actually interesting, because I went down to my hairdresser. And I told the girls who would be there, they would be late teens to 25, and I remember in the lead-up to the theatrical release of me saying, "I Am Woman, it's going to be in cinemas in May," and I think they went, "Cool." And then I said, "Well, cinema release isn't happening now, it's going to premiere on Stan on August 28th." And they went, "Oh my god! That's amazing, you're going to be on Stan!" [inaudible 01:03:31]. I don't know if those girls, even though they love me dearly, would've gone to the cinema, but they will absolutely be tuning in on Stan, and I think that, isn't it, Rose? We'll always have our Helen audience, and our dedicated audience too, but I think that reach that Stan has. It's fascinating, isn't it? |
| Rose: | It is, and I think during this time, a lot has changed.. We now have this world, I'll be... I love going to the cinema, I equally love watching things on Stan, I equally love the fact that Stan's going to... Has created an opportunity for this film to be seen by millions of people. The release on Stan will enable everyone to see this film, you can watch it as many times as you like.   |

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| Aimee: | How do you measure a successful film when you're not seeing audience reactions, you're not getting those box office figures.-What is a successful film in the digital age?   |
| Emma:  | When my hairdresser says, "I saw it, it was really good." No.  |
| Rose:  | True. When my Pilates instructor said, "I saw you on the side of a bus!" I had to tell her it wasn't me.   |
| Rose:  | Look, it is... Look, that will be something which I think will change, as well, in terms of how we get our digital numbers. I know that Stan will tell us... Will give us a sense of the success, whether we'll get exact numbers I don't know, but I do know that the Kelly Gang did incredibly well for them in terms of audience wanting to watch it, so they subscribed to Stan. That's a way. But also, our audience is quite noisy. They're on Twitter, they're on... We've got an active Facebook, there's a fan club. I think they'll find us. I think they'll find us, wherever we are, hopefully, and tell us. |
| Emma:  | We'll be able to tell by people who are passing are singing or humming <i>I Am Woman</i> in the street.  |
| Rose:  | Yes, exactly.  |
| Aimee: | Rose, as a producer, does it change the way you're thinking about releasing films, and how you're approaching that process?  |
| Rose:  | Independent cinema has been challenged for a long time. In the last few years, it has not been easy financing independent movies anywhere in the world. Now, during this crisis, and things have... The change has accelerated, I think that we're all sitting back, and we're having a look at what that means on how we finance projects. It's unknown what's going on in the States, what cinemas will be around at the end of it, what distributors will want.   |
|        | So, audiences still want to see movies. They might see them on different screens, that went... <i>Invisible Man</i> went to Premium VOD after day 20 or something in America, and did very, very well in that space. People will still want movies that have a theatrical ambition, whether they're screening on a small screen or a large screen, we've still got to have films with the ambition of a theatrical intent. And that... And I mean that... Stan is playing the film on 4K, it's... Dolby Atmos, so they're going to give everyone a cinematic experience.   |

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| Rose:  | the films that we have our hand in at the moment, and we're looking at, are films that have a... Which have scale, whether they're going to be on a cinema screen or on a streamer.  |
| Aimee: | And further to that, too, particularly Goalpost's focus on uniquely Australian stories for a global audience. I'm thinking <i>Top End Wedding</i> , <i>Holding the Man</i> , <i>Sapphires</i> , and then, <i>I Am Woman</i> . Is that intentional, is that always Goalpost's focus? Telling those Australian stories?  |
| Rose:  | They're the stories that we fell in love with, and it's exciting to unearth stories like that, and to be able to take them to the screen.  |
| Rose:  | Yes, and extremely important, I think, that indigenous storytellers telling their stories, telling their own stories with whoever they want to tell those stories with is extremely important, and our indigenous storytellers have proved time and time and time again that an audience wants to see it. Audiences want these movies. Australians want to see their own movie, they want to see their own stories.  |
| Aimee: | Do you see that parallel particularly in female-led storytelling? Women telling women's stories?   |
| Emma:  | Yes. Look, I think maybe that hark back to... It felt like there was a fight for a long time to really justify why a female story had to be told. Beyond, there is a very dedicated female-going audience here in Australia, so I think that's been a key part of the fight. I think obviously, as a writer, I had skewed towards female stories. Not to say that's all that I tell, but... I guess it was interesting for <i>I Am Woman</i> , for <i>Mary Shelley</i> , there was something in those struggles. I know what I personally could connect to in those stories, and potentially because they were also about the struggle to be recognized, and to be heard, and to say that women have value, female stories have always had value. So, I think that's what I found particularly resonant in my own journey that I could bring to these stories. |
| Aimee: | when was the first time that you heard the song I Am Woman, and what does it mean to you?  |
| Emma:  | I feel like I've always known the song. I know that might sound strange, but I can't remember when it really hit my consciousness, whether... My mum used to sing a lot growing up as a sister, so whether it's something she sang... But actually, I  |

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|        | <p>know her story in hearing it was, she lived in Townsville, it's where she grew up, and she got a job at Channel Seven, so this was the early 1970s, which was up on the hill in Townsville, and she said she'd get a lift up with her colleague, her female colleague. Apparently she played it in the car. Oh, she used to sing it in the car. So, that's... When I was talking to mum about, "Do you know when you first heard it?" And she couldn't... But she remembers being a young woman in Townsville singing this song as she drove up and down the mountain, but yes. For me, I feel like it's something I've always been aware of, and now I've probably exhausted at karaoke.</p>  |
|        | <p>And if I think about the specifics of the song, there are two things that I always really love. I love the way Helen sings that first part when she says "I am woman," and the way she does it with such conviction. I love the way she punches out woman, and I love the chorus. I love the wisdom born of pain, and that always... Oh, I've got goosebumps now. And I think... And now, I think there's so many moments for me, in remembering that song, in... Whether it be Rose or Unjoo and I singing it in a script meeting, whether it's Helen singing it on stage, whether it's been seeing our beautiful Tilly perform it, whether it was us singing at Toronto, and with Helen's children, with Traci and granddaughter Lily. And you never get sick of it. You never get sick of it, and we have listened to it a lot.</p> |
| Rose:  | <p>Yes, a lot lot lot. Look, I'm with Em. I can't remember when I first heard it. I do have this memory of it being on either Explosive Hits 74 or Bobby Dazzler's 75. There was these albums that used to come out in the '70s, I was very young, but I had these albums, compilation albums of hits, the top 40 hits-</p>   |
| Aimee: | <p>Hits For You '92, and To The Max.</p>  |
| Rose:  | <p>Yes. To The Max, yes.</p>  |
| Emma:  | <p>[inaudible 01:18:32] Summer '87.</p>   |

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| Rose:  | I think it was part of a canvas of the time, of... Every year, when you speak to the record company who owned... Who had... Now, it doesn't own I Am Woman, but looks after I Am Woman, they say. Every International Women's Day, the streaming of I Am Woman goes up 1000 percent or something. It is the song that was played when exciting things were happening for women, when there was a women's issue to discuss, or it's International Women's Day, and it was this loop through growing up, and I can't remember when I first saw it. I'm so sorry, we should know this, we have been asked this question before. So... But it is... I listen to it when things get... it can be hard working in the arts sector, and I listen to it, and I go, "You know what? We can do this." So, I still find it really empowering, bizarrely. I find it really... I feel great when I hear that song. |
| Aimee: | I don't know when I first heard it. My mum was a big Helen Reddy fan, so it's always been my life. and it's funny because at the 2018 Women's March, so many of those lyrics ended up on the placards, and I was watching the film, and that last performance at the Women's Collective,  |
| Rose:  | Oh, that was '89.   |
| Aimee: | Oh, '89. Oh, of course, yes. You could've swapped out that crowd for the 2018 Women's March, or the Women's Collective from the late '70s, and there's something that's still so resonant about it that unites women in that... In the struggle, I guess, that reminds them, as you said, Rose, there's still power in who you are, and you can get through this. Because you are strong, and you are invincible.   |
| Rose:  | Exactly, and roar. I agree. It's a great song. It's an anthem.  |
| Emma:  | When you sing it, and you're in a group, or when we shot the final scene, Rose, with the extras, and... You can turn... I love that feeling of it, you can be singing it, and turn to any woman around you, who you don't know at all, but you share this common bond of this song, and it's a really beautiful connector, as well.   |
| Aimee: | Thank you both so much for your time today, I really appreciate your... Sharing your experiences, and sharing your passion for the project with me.   |
| Emma:  | Thank you so much.  |
| Rose:  | Yes, thank you.   |

Aimee:

*I Am Woman* will premiere exclusively on Stan on 28th August 2020 so check it out. Don't forget you can catch the latest screen news on the Screen Queensland website, [screenqueensland.com.au](http://screenqueensland.com.au)